THE DEATH PENALTY DEBATE

The issue of the death penalty is one of the most hotly debated subjects in the country. Most Americans have made up their minds one way or another. So have you, I suspect. However, the goal of our debate is open up the pros and cons of the death penalty, its effectiveness, its humaneness and its fairness. To think more clearly about this issue in criminal justice.

The Learning Resource Center on the main campus has a ton of information on the death penalty - articles, books, etc. Also, there is a TON of information on the internet. You should have absolutely no trouble finding resources to argue your "side".

You will be assigned a side - either FOR the death penalty, or AGAINST the death penalty. We'll pick names for each side in class. It doesn’t matter if your personal opinion matches the side you are on. I think that's even better because you learn more! There is NO right or wrong side to this debate.

Each side will choose two co-captains. Co-captains are in charge of making sure the group is ready for the debate and that all topics have been researched. Co-captains are also responsible for composing an opening statement for their side. IF YOU AGREE TO BECOME A CO-CAPTAIN, YOU ARE AGREEING TO BE HERE FOR THE DURATION OF THIS PROJECT. IF YOU KNOW YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BE HERE FOR CLASS IN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, DO NOT TAKE THE JOB OF CO-CAPTAIN! Also, if you are a member of the group that cannot be here for the debate, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GET YOUR INFO ON YOUR TOPIC TO YOUR CO-CAPTAINS...EVERYONE WILL TURN IN THEIR RESEARCH AND A PAPER (see attached assignment).

The following topics will be the basis of the questions we'll use for our debate in the next couple of weeks. It is your job, as a group, to research each topic - focusing on how they affect the death penalty. Remember, the way a debate works is that each side is asked the same question, answers one at a time, then makes remarks on the other’s response.

TOPIC #1: The PURPOSE of punishment. Does the death penalty serve or deny the purpose of punishment?

TOPIC #2: The DETERRENT effect of the death penalty. Is the death penalty a deterrent? Does deterrence need capital punishment?

TOPIC #3: The CONSTITUTIONAL question. Is the death penalty "cruel and unusual punishment"?

TOPIC #4: Does the death penalty discriminate? Is justice served?

TOPIC #5: How does religion play into the public's view of the death penalty?
Each group member is to come up with research on the topics above. Remember, a debate includes RESEARCH, cases, quotes, citings, SOMETHING TO BASE YOUR ANSWERS ON - NOT JUST OPINION!

Co-Captains may elect to send students to the computer lab for additional internet research. That’s fine, but a word of caution regarding internet sites. IF YOU ARE GOING TO USE AN INTERNET SITE AS A SOURCE, BE SURE YOU KNOW WHO THEY ARE, WHAT THEY STAND FOR AND WHERE THEY GET THEIR STATISTICS...Remember, anyone can put anything out there on the web, so it’s important if you quote something to make sure it’s valid.

You are to work on this during the rest of class today, and be prepared for the debate next week.

Believe it or not, this will be fun, educational and interesting. AND YES, YOU WILL BE GRADED ON THIS. You will be assigned a two-page paper (see attached).